

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Friday, September 19, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Good to just get into our processes. Here we are week 3 and just getting the rhythms of the weeks and how to win each day, having that mentality, how to approach it, what we're looking for, what we want to come off the field accomplishing each day. So just really felt that today from the guys. The focus was there, and a great day.

It's going to be warm. It was a beautiful warm day today. It's going to be like that on kickoff, so just a good opportunity for us to just kind of work in the elements we're expecting.

The guys are all excited to be at home. They're excited to be in our stadium, in Bank of America Stadium in front of our fans to continue to be able to build this thing and really just become this team that we're looking to become.

#### **Q. With Pat questionable, do you feel good about him playing?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I think questionable is right. We're going to still have to take it day-to-day. He did take some reps. He's bugging me to play. He's like, Coach, I'm good, Coach, I'm good. So we just have to be really sure that we test this thing and move him around so we feel confident that he can be out there and be himself, so that's something that we're going to have to look it again tomorrow morning and just move him around and talk to him some tomorrow to see where we're at there.

Again, he's a guy that he knows the work is right there for him, and he wants to be out there. But I've got to make the best decision for him. I've got to make the best decision for us.

#### **Q. That said, do you have to be cognizant of the fact that it kind of feels like there's a lot of things that are -- not necessarily going wrong but not going his way of late? If he sits out or if he does play and he's kind of at half strength, do you also have to balance that in those discussions?**

DAVE CANALES: For me it's really about football. It's about his ability to play to his full speed, to be able to react to things and not to have other things on his mind as far as just, like, dealing with the hamstring and how that might affect him and just the whole group.

For me it's always going to be a football decision, and I want to make the best decision for X but also for us.

#### **Q. With Pat out, what does that mean for Nick and this opportunity?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, opportunity is right for guys to step up. Something we talked about, the young guys being out there, getting experience, and really becoming pros. They're here for a reason, so with Pat, we weren't able to get him back, get him around to a point where we felt like he was strong enough to go this week, but we've got other guys that will have that opportunity with DJ Johnson and Thomas Incoom and of course Nick and Princely who were out there playing the first couple of games.

#### **Q. With Pat, is that week to week with the hamstring?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it will be. It'll be week to week right now.

#### **Q. Thomas has gotten a lot of praise through the summer and everything about his speed and everything like that. If he is thrust into this role, as you've said, what do you think he can bring to the defense?**

DAVE CANALES: Just his energy. He plays with a high motor. He gives us some stuff in the pass rush role, and he plays physical against the run. I think he's one of our -- I think he is our best special teams player. I know he is. He shows that kind of spirit that we're looking for from our play style, so he embodies that. I love when he's out there. He's 100 miles an hour every time he's on the grass, so I love the spirit of who Thomas is.

#### **Q. Looking at the offensive line with Robert and Austin being out, going to be Cade and Chandler stepping in there, what have you seen from them this**



**week that gives you confidence in those guys moving forward?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, they're ready to go. These are guys that have been preparing and really we're playing with the same offensive line we finished the season with. Rob didn't play that last game and we had Cade in there, and there was some good chemistry in there in the run game and in the protection some.

I was really pleased with their week of work and feel very confident about Cade and Chandler getting out there playing for us.

**Q. We talked this off-season about this offensive line staying the same. Have you really noticed it this week, like taking a load off your mind, like hey, these guys have been out there, they know how to play this team and run this offense?**

DAVE CANALES: I mean, my default is always just opportunities, so whenever we ask guys to step up into roles, I get excited for those moments for the guys, and so that's kind of always my mentality. This is one of those with Cade and with Chandler coming in there.

At the same time, these are guys that I really trust that have been around our system now, and my trust level is super high for that group.

**Q. You talk about development all the time, wanting to do that with this organization. Is this kind of where it plays out when you get guys like Cade and Chandler getting out there?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely, and while we try not to force the issue on things, we're always looking for opportunities to find a role for a guy. We only get so many guys up on game day. If we can find a role for them where they're ready to contribute in some way, shape or form, Chandler played the big tight end for us a couple of snaps last week, so these are different ways to get the guys out there playing ball. Now when they get these opportunities, this is really cool for them, to be able to get out there, settle into their game, go drive to drive, regroup on the sideline and get back into the rhythm of playing ball.

**Q. You guys haven't had a lead yet this season. Have you emphasized how important the opening script is to this group and starting off strong?**

DAVE CANALES: We just talk about execution, and that's always the goal. The goal is to make sure that we're just doing our job. Do your 1/11. That's really all it's about. All of us have a role, myself included, so we just ask the guys

to focus on that because that's where those early-drive successes come. We had a nice first drive against the Jags last week, didn't work out. We gave up points on the first drive. But it comes down to execution. It's all guys working together, whether it's offense or defense or special teams.

Starting off fast is about execution; can we be in the right mental space to just do our job.

**Q. Are you looking for Skorton or Princely to get more playing time in the Jones situation? Is there one of those guys that you're looking at to lean on heavier or are you trying to be trying to fix them both in?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Nick Skorton will get more of the reps on 1st and 2nd down. Princely still has a nice role for us in our known pass types of situation with the rush and all that, but we're asking Nick to be a stud and step up. He went about it the right way this week, and he worked his butt off. He was flying around. He's excited about the opportunity.

**Q. Going back to the opening script, how involved is Bryce with you in kind of going over it? Do you go through plays that he likes, that he doesn't like that you choose?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. It's an ongoing conversation throughout the week, so every day we finish practice with a group of plays. We have a walk-through, then we have our practice and then we kind of rehash what did we love based on the looks we got. Okay, even if one may not have worked out exactly right, we say, okay, schematically this is a really good play, I still like this, and that's a constant check-in every afternoon/evening as we watch the film, finish the meetings.

On Thursday it's like, okay, we got a couple more reps of the 1st and 2nd down stuff, our 3rd down plan, what are our favorites just right now. Then we come back on a Friday and kind of throw the whole game plan at them and have a couple more conversations this afternoon so that we can go out there with the things we feel confident on and we know we can play fast with.

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